



5 Land Use

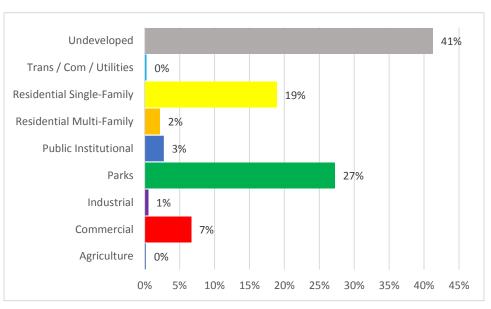
Existing Land Use

The City of St. Marys analyzed development patterns, land uses, current zoning designations, and existing plans to develop a baseline for development of the future land use strategy (character areas). The existing land use makeup within the City gives a good indication of likely development within various areas. Previous zoning decisions and recent development patterns also provide some insight as to what is currently allowed and the market demand for different types of residential and commercial development. Using these resources helped the City and the MPSC formulate a future development strategy that is realistic and consistent with the existing demand and trends within the City. Additionally, the future vision for areas may require revisions to the current zoning ordinance to achieve that vision, which will be represented in the zoning audit.



The City created a parcel specific existing land use map in the fall of 2015 using desktop GIS practices and field verification via a windshield survey. Figure 5 shows the current land use breakdown within the City by percent.

There is a significant portion of undeveloped land within the City. Undeveloped land can be viewed in



two categories; undeveloped land that is likely to be developed in the future (i.e. residential lots) and undeveloped land likely to remain undeveloped (i.e. Coastal marshlands). Since these two categories account for such a significant portion of land area, the City also analyzed land use breakdown based on what is currently developed. Residential land use accounts for roughly 20% of land acreage within the City; however, when evaluating the land use breakdown of only developed land area, residential land use accounts for nearly 60% of the total developed area. Table 2, on the next page shows the comparison of the percentage breakdown of developed land use categories within the City as compared to developed areas.



Table 2: Land Use Comparison

| Land Use | Percent of Total City Area | Percent of Developed Area |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Commercial | 7% | 21% |
| Industrial | 1% | 2% |
| Public Institutional | 3% | 9% |
| Residential Multi-Family | 2% | 7% |
| Residential Single-Family | 19% | 60% |
| Trans / Com / Utilities | 0% | 1% |

Previous development patterns in St. Marys were generally like those in the rest of Coastal Georgia. During the late 1990's and early 2000's, the pace of residential development was accelerated. Many lots and residential communities were designed and platted during this time, but never reached full build-out due to a slowing economy. Thus, there are vacant lots located in neighborhoods throughout the community. As the economy rebounds and development picks up, it is anticipated that residential growth will continue in these neighborhoods.

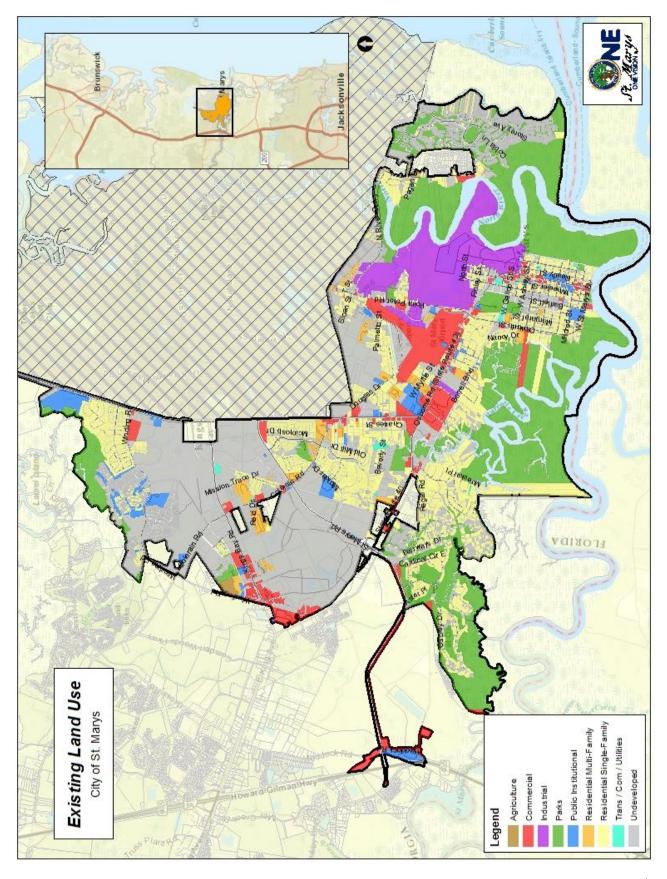
Commercial development has been confined to three primary geographic areas of the City; historic downtown, mid-town and the hospital area adjacent to the Kingsland city limits. There are many undeveloped, platted single-family lots and areas zoned R-3 (multi-family) located throughout the City. When reviewing the land use map, large undeveloped parcels are located adjacent to existing commercial corridors.

The following are three major land masses in and around the City that are likely to have great influence on the way future development will occur.

- ⇒ Airport Site. The airport has been officially closed by the FAA and will revert to the City of St. Marys for future development. The City will study market trends to understand the feasibility of developing this site with a mix of uses.
- ⇒ The Mill Site. The Mill Site is currently zoned as an industrial planned development. The property is privately owned by a Trustee who has a potential buyer/developer, and it is anticipated that the development will include a mix of industrial and commercial uses. If successful, this project will provide needed jobs and could stimulate economic development in other locations of the City.
- ⇒ SUBASE Kings Bay. A significant portion of the City's population is related to SUBASE employment. Thus, any growth or decline of SUBASE activity could significantly influence development patterns in the City as whole.

The existing land use map in Figure 6 illustrates the breakdown of land use within the City of St. Marys at the time of the inventory in the fall of 2015.





May 2017 23 |

Future Development Strategy

Through a series of public workshops, the City of St. Marys identified "character areas" within the community to illustrate desired development patterns. These areas can contain a mix of different land uses that share similar characteristics or a desired future vision.

The City of St. Marys is using the Character Area approach to formulate a Future Development Strategy that is consistent with the Strategic Vision. The Community Character Area map will be the basis for ongoing updates to the City's Zoning Ordinance and will be used by staff and elected officials to make decision regarding new development and redevelopment.

The following Character Areas have been identified by the community, and are shown in the map on the following page:

- ⇒ Conservation
- ⇒ Developing Residential
- ⇒ Downtown
- ⇒ Inland Residential
- ⇒ Interstate Access Corridors
- ⇒ Marshside Residential
- ⇒ Mixed Use Medical
- ⇒ Multi-Use Development
- ⇒ South Gate Revitalization Area
- ⇒ SUBASE Kings Bay Transition Zone

Each character area description includes a summary of existing land uses and implementation measures to achieve the desired land uses.



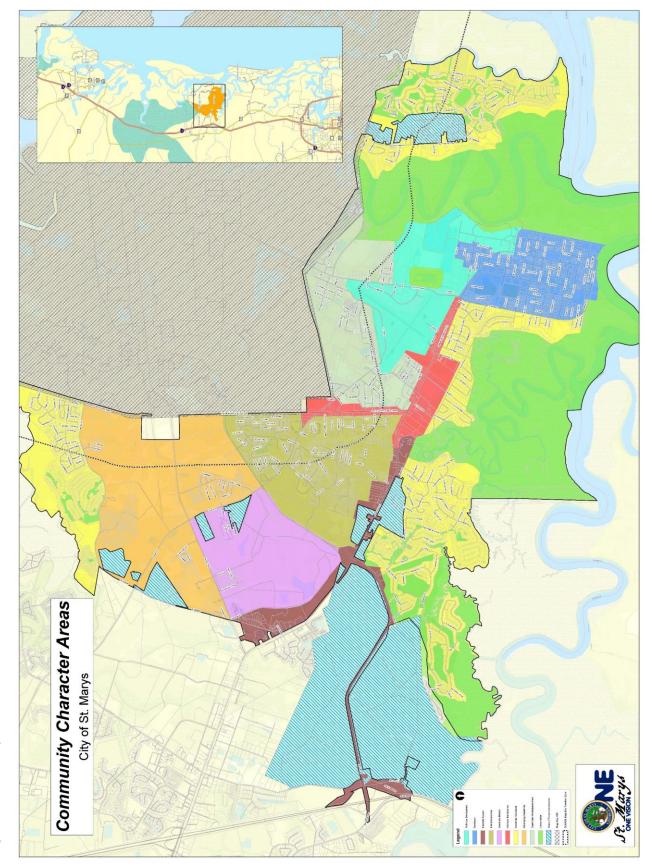


Figure 7: Community Character Areas

May 2017 25 |

May 2017 26 |

Conservation

St. Marys and the surrounding region have a wealth of unique and extraordinary natural resources, which contribute to the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. This character area identifies environmental resources that should be preserved for low-impact recreation, multi-use trails, habitat protection, or conservation. This area may include sensitive habitats, coastal marshlands, cultural and recreational amenities.



Issues

Cumberland Island and the estuarine waterways in and around St. Marys that allow recreational access to the Intracoastal Waterway and Atlantic Ocean provide major potential tourism attractions for St. Marys. These sensitive coastal resources should be preserved and protected and low-impact access should be provided where feasible.

Look for opportunities to provide more access to the coastal environment through the creation of greenways, multi-use trails, docks, boardwalks, and parks.

Protect and secure important viewsheds within St. Marys.

Adopt and develop funding mechanism to implement stormwater standards consistent with the Coastal Stormwater Supplement.

Discourage development within designated flood zones or Special Flood Hazard Areas.

Maintain natural character and promote conservation through the use of conservation easements.

To the extent possible, create connectivity to greenspace by linking parks, undeveloped areas, and open spaces through a network of multi-use trails.





Developing Residential

This character area addresses that area bounded by Winding Road, Colerain Road, and St. Marys Road. This area is largely undeveloped but is poised for future growth due to its proximity to the Navy Sub Base and Interstate 95. In many cases, subdivisions have already been platted, but development has not yet taken place. The City has an opportunity to plan for this future growth and encourage more traditional residential development patterns. The focus in this character area should be on a mix of residential densities, connectivity within the street pattern, multi-use transportation facilities, and amenities for the residents such as parks, multi-use trails, and neighborhood-scale commercial uses.



Issues

There is a need to provide moderately-priced single-family and multi-family housing in St. Marys.

New development and infill development should include a variety of housing types and densities.

Future developments should be required to dedicate a certain percentage of their property to greenspace, including neighborhood parks, trails, and natural areas.

Promote moderate-density, traditional neighborhood development.

New development should be planned with mixed-uses, blending residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail businesses and services, linked in a compact pattern that encourages walking and minimizes the need for auto trips within the subdivision.

Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character.





Downtown

Downtown St. Marys serves as a gateway to Cumberland Island National Seashore and is recognized as a welcoming family-friendly small town. This area includes the St. Marys Historic District, which is listed on the National Historic Register, surrounding residential neighborhoods, and the commercial corridor of Osborne Road, east of the Point Peter Road intersection. The downtown includes the City's working waterfront on the St. Marys River, a public event venue and park, and ferry access to Cumberland Island. In addition, the waterfront gives recreational boaters access to the Atlantic Ocean and the intracoastal waterways. The Downtown area of St. Marys has its own character with the potential to attract future tourism and enhance the sense of place within the City.



Issues

The waterfront is in need of attention and investment through upgrades, expansion, and infrastructure improvements. There are vacant and, in some cases, blighted buildings. There is limited public access to overnight boat slips. There is limited access to basic needs, such as shopping, groceries and supplies for residents, visitors, and boaters who do not have access to an automobile. This issue is further compounded by the lack of public transportation to other areas of St. Marys. There is a desire for more restaurants, entertainment and retail opportunities in the downtown; however, existing residential density in the downtown area does not support the desired commercial uses. There is limited parking for waterfront events and potentially insufficient parking should demand increase.



Review the recommendations of the Downtown St. Marys Strategic Vision and Plan and adopt those recommendations that are consistent with the Master Plan.

Encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures.

Require infill development and redevelopment to be compatible in terms of architecture, mass, scale and lot location with the existing neighborhood.

Develop public docks and encourage private marina upgrading.

Improve aesthetics in the waterfront area.

Establish and build a hospitality development on the Gateway property.

Permit residential homeowners to have cottages or furnished rooms over garages (FROG).

Require architectural standards that preserve the historic fabric of the neighborhood.

Residential infill development should support the commercial core by including higher density housing options, such as upstairs residential, multi-family town homes, apartments and condominiums.

Consider reductions in minimum residential lot sized to achieve increased densities.

Encourage a mix of retail, office, services that provide for the daily needs of residents and visitors.

Streetscapes should be pedestrian-oriented, with walkable connections.

Road edges should be clearly defined by locating new or rehabilitative construction at roadside with parking in the rear.

Develop ordinances that better define and protect historic properties from demolition and encourage rehabilitation.

Historic properties should be maintained or rehabilitated/restored according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Preserve the oak canopy through tree protection and replacement programs





Inland Residential/Midtown Neighborhood

This area includes a variety of residential subdivision development patterns. The area east of Dark Entry Creek typically has smaller lot sizes, and homes there have a higher orientation to the street, with shorter front yard setbacks, front porches, sidewalks, and street trees. West of Dark Entry Creek residential development is more consistent with the more recent development patterns found in the Marshside Residential area. Redevelopment and infill development should be consistent with existing development and maintain the grid street pattern and sidewalk network, where appropriate. Neighborhood-scale commercial and civic uses are appropriate within this area to provide residents better access to services and retail. Future development should be designed to encourage pedestrian, bicycle and golf cart travel.



Issues

Some neighborhoods within this area experience a sense of isolation due to the lack of connection to other areas of St. Marys other than by automobile, the lack of youth oriented supervised recreational and after school facilities, and the existence of food desserts.

May 2017 33 |

Preserve and continue grid street pattern, where feasible.

Encourage infill development that is consistent in architectural style, mass, and scale with existing homes.

Provide multi-modal connectivity to St. Marys Middle School and Midtown Renaissance area.

Provide pocket parks where appropriate.

Reinforce stability of area by encouraging more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties.

Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for infill development of new, architecturally compatible housing.

Allow neighborhood-scale commercial development & activities at suitable locations, e.g. restaurants, grocery store, hardware store, and similar appropriately-scaled retail establishments serving neighborhood residents.

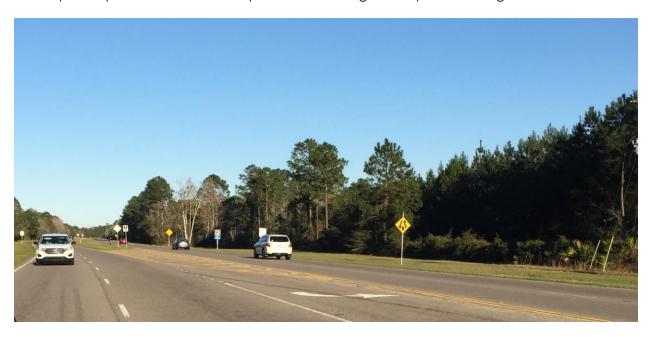
Provide pedestrian and bicycle connections to permit residents to walk/cycle to destinations in the area.





Interstate Access Corridors

This represents the I-95 Exit 1 area and extends along St. Marys Rd to the intersection with State Route 40. It also includes the Hwy 40 Corridor between the Kings Bay Road intersection and Dark Entry Creek Bridge. These corridors are the primary entrances to the City of St. Marys. Focus along these corridors should include landscaping and improved signage to let residents and visitors know that they have arrived in St. Marys. St. Marys Road serves as a main evacuation route for St. Marys and SUBASE Kings Bay. The Hwy 40 corridor is likely to face future commercial development pressure due to the expansion of existing development in Kingsland to the west.



Issues

The exits and roadways lack effective and attractive signage able to direct both commercial and recreational visitors to St. Marys. Exit 1 off I-95 is inadequate in design and appearance to serve as an attractive or inviting entry into Georgia and does not encourage people to stop at that exit. St. Marys Road is a major evacuation route for the Navy, so development along this route may be limited.

The Exit 1 Visitor Center provides an opportunity to showcase St. Marys and encourage tourists to visit St. Marys.

Work with state government officials to improve the State Visitors' Center and redesign Exit 1 to better handle the commercial traffic coming on and off the interstate.

Implement a signage and landscaping plan at the intersection of Hwy 40 and St. Marys Road.

Look for opportunities to provide city services and annex undeveloped land on either side of the St. Marys Road corridor.

Maintain a natural vegetation buffer (at least 50 feet in width) along the St. Marys Road corridor.

All new development should be set-back behind this buffer, with access roads, shared driveways or inter-parcel road connections providing alternate access to these developments and reducing curb cuts and traffic on the main highway.

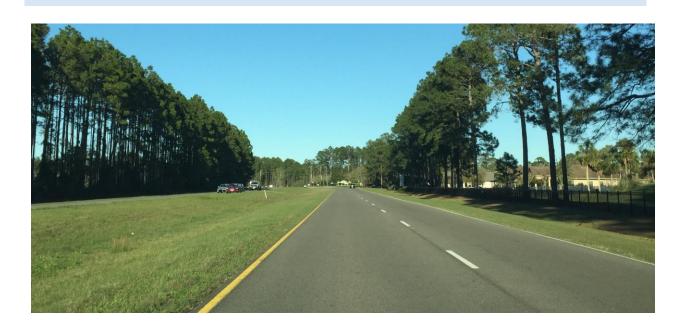
Encourage landscaped, raised medians to provide vehicular safety, aesthetics, as well as a pedestrian crossing refuge.

Provide pedestrian facilities/sidewalks behind drainage ditches or curb.

Where possible, provide paved shoulders and/or bicycle lanes that can be used by bicycles or as emergency breakdown lanes.

Manage access and keep traffic flowing by using directory signage to developments.

Prohibit the addition of any new billboards.



Marshside Residential

These are established residential areas with similar post-1960 suburban development patterns, including curvilinear streets, larger single family lots, limited pedestrian orientation, and large front setbacks. Many of these areas were developed under a Master Plan or as a planned subdivision. These areas may contain onsite amenities for residents of the community, water access, and view sheds of the marsh. There is a high percentage of undeveloped lots within this area, so future development should focus on infill housing that is consistent with the existing neighborhood fabric and makes efficient use of existing infrastructure and the large undeveloped lot inventory.



Issues

There are properties within this area not served by St. Marys water and sewer infrastructure, and there are unincorporated islands within New Point Peter subdivision that should be annexed into the City.

Encourage infill development on existing lots served by City water and sewer.

Require new subdivisions to tie in to public water and sewer.

Convert private wells and septic systems to public water and sewer service.

Infill development should be consistent with the character and Master Plan for development.

Protect and preserve natural resources in these areas, including wetlands and coastal marshlands

Larger lots and less dense residential development is appropriate in these areas.

Provide neighborhood focal points by locating community centers, or well-designed small commercial activity centers at suitable locations within walking distance of residences





Midtown Renaissance

This area has the potential to be redeveloped as a commercial center for the City of St. Marys. Centrally located, this area sits at the crossroads of Hwy 40, Osborne Street, and Charlie Smith Jr. Highway and currently includes an underutilized shopping center as well as an aging and aesthetically unappealing warehouse/office building. This area includes a commercial corridor from the shopping center north to the SUBASE and east on Osborne Street to the downtown district. Development should focus on restaurants, services, neighborhood-scale commercial establishments, and family-friendly activities. Aesthetic improvements are needed to provide an attractive environment for shoppers, and multi-modal connections to residential areas should be provided were feasible. The orientation of the buildings along this corridor should be to the road, with parking largely on the sides or behind the building. Architectural standards for future development and façade renovations for existing structures is recommended. With appropriate planning and investment, this area could become a shopping destination, providing retail, restaurant, and entertainment opportunities for the residents of and visitors to St. Marys.



Issues

There is a need for more family-friendly activities within St. Marys. There is a consumer need for more diverse retail opportunities. The Kings Bay Village Shopping Center and the midtown to downtown corridor have significant vacant commercial space. Two five-lane State roads intersect within this area, and make walking safely a challenge. The aesthetics of this corridor are lacking. There are existing light industrial and residential uses along this corridor that do not fit the desired character.

Establish architectural standards for development and redevelopment along this corridor.

Encourage redevelopment and infill commercial development along this corridor.

Improve the safety and aesthetics of the area through streetscaping (i.e. median islands, landscaping, street lighting, and signage.)

Regulate commercial signage along this corridor.

Discourage single-family residential uses and prohibit the intrusion of industrial uses along this corridor.

Allow a diverse mix of higher-density housing types, adjacent to the commercial development, including multi-family townhomes, apartments, lofts, and condominiums.

Encourage the private development of family-friendly activities along this corridor, such as indoor sporting venues, bowling/gaming, skating, etc.

In cooperation with the owner, encourage redevelopment of the Kings Bay Mall area through a master-planned concept. Retrofit this property to be more marketable through the addition of more commercial structures, office space, pedestrian amenities, and landscaping.

Upgrading the appearance of existing older commercial buildings with façade improvement, new architectural elements, or awnings.

Providing pedestrian and bicycling amenities, including covered walkways, benches, lighting and bicycle racks.

Mixed Use Medical

The Medical Activity Center includes the Southeast Georgia Health System and is bounded by St. Marys Road, Colerain Road, and Kings Bay Road. Future development should focus on medical services and other uses that promote wellness and community health, including senior and assisted living housing, greenspace and recreational facilities, and commercial development consistent with these uses.







Issues

St. Marys has an aging population that will need aging in place services. Many residents of St. Marys are currently forced to travel to Jacksonville or Brunswick for needed medical services. This area could provide a central location for medial and aging services. It should be noted that this area is also facing commercial development pressure from Kingsland.

Development Strategies

Encourage aging in place resources and facilities, including retirement developments, assisted living housing, parks, activities, retail, and medical services.

Encourage planned development or "campus-style" medical developments.

Work with private developers to build tax credit senior housing.

Use landscaping and buffers to separate adjacent use and screen unattractive areas such as parking lots.

Encourage greater mix of uses (such as retail and services to serve hospital employees and residents of senior housing) to reduce automobile reliance/use.

Multi-Use Development

This area includes the airport site, the Mill Site, and adjacent industrial parks. A mix of commercial, public/institutional and clean industrial uses should be promoted in this area with appropriate consideration for the surrounding neighborhoods. This area provides the best opportunity for job creation within a range of employment sectors that would expand and diversify the economy of St. Marys. Protection of sensitive environmental resources, including the

Rookery, and low impact on adjacent residential areas must be an essential element of any future redevelopment.



Issues

The City needs to assure permanent protection of environmentally sensitive areas within the Mill Site consistent with the conditions imposed when the Mill Site was rezoned. There some areas of contamination within the Mill Site that may require remediation for commercial or industrial development. In some instances, the properties surrounding the Mill Site and the airport are falling into disrepair.

Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized industrial sites to provide a variety of employment opportunities within St. Marys.

Establish and implement stormwater standards within this district that are consistent with the Coastal Stormwater Supplement.

Development within this area should be master-planned with appropriate architectural and design standards.

Encourage the location of light industrial and clean/green manufacturing industries within industrial areas.

Allow for and encourage supporting commercial uses to buffer the industrial development from surrounding neighborhoods and to support the employers/employees at the industrial facilities.

Incorporate landscaping and site design to soften or shield views of buildings and parking lots, loading docks, etc.

Incorporate signage and lighting guidelines to enhance quality of development.

Use buffers to separate adjacent but different uses.

Assure permanent protection of environmentally sensitive areas.





South Gate Revitalization Area

This area represents property and neighborhoods that have been directly and indirectly impacted by the closing of the South Gate access to SUBASE Kings Bay. There is opportunity for residential and commercial redevelopment and infill development within this area. Development within this area should focus on providing a mix of residential densities, and improving public transportation access from the neighborhood to retail, services, and schools in the area.



Issues

This area continues to suffer from a combination of recession, lack of employment and the closure of the South Gate to SUBASE Kings Bay. Many residents do not have safe access to basic retail services and recreational activities. There are limited pedestrian and bicycle networks and inadequate and unreliable public transportation.

Continue discussions with the Navy to see whether it might be possible to reopen the South Gate for a two to four-hour period to allow easier access to downtown during the lunch hour.

Work with Coastal Regional Transit to improve public transportation services this area.

Provide access to alternative forms of transportation and connections to the other commercial areas of the City.

The redevelopment strategy for the area should focus on preserving and rehabilitating what remains of the original housing stock, while encouraging neighborhood type residential development on the remaining land.

Public grants and private investment should be focused where needed to foster redevelopment and stabilization of the community.

Encourage apartment complex owners to maintain and upgrade rental properties.

Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections should be provided to enable residents to walk/cycle to work, shopping, or other destinations in the area.



SUBASE Kings Bay Transition Zone

SUBASE Kings Bay occupies about 16,000 acres of land, of which approximately one quarter are protected coastal marshlands. Georgia State Law O.C.G.A. § 36-66-6 requires a 3,000-foot buffer zone around the boarder of any military installation, including the SUBASE, to address issues related to security and land use directly adjacent to it. Zoning and land use decisions within this buffer area with the potential to affect military operations must be coordinated with the SUBASE. The Camden Kings Bay Joint Land Use Study, completed in 2014 through a partnership between the Navy, Camden County, and the cities of St. Marys, Woodbine, and Kingsland, identifies potential development that could occur within this buffer area, as well as the uses that are consistent with the vision and goals of both the SUBASE and surrounding communities.



Issues

A portion of the airport site lies within this zone and redevelopment could have has a direct impact on SUBASE Kings Bay. Other property that will redevelop adjacent to this zone, including the Mill Site, will also potentially have an impact on SUBASE operations.

Development Strategies

Develop overlay district standards to require Naval review of development applications within the Transition Zone.

Engage with the Navy to assure that civilian use of the St. Marys River, intracoastal waterway, and its tributaries does not conflict with SUBASE operations.



Zoning Recommendations

The City of St. Marys has already begun the process of updating their Zoning Ordinance, based on public input received at the Zoning and Land Use Workshops and in accordance with the Future Development Strategy. The table below provides a summary of a detailed review of the City's current Zoning Ordinance, including aspects of the ordinance needing revision (or deletion) as well as suggested additions to the current regulatory provisions. The detailed review included an evaluation of existing zoning districts, uses and standards, administrative processes, zone changes, variances, and special permits.

Zoning Ordinance Recommendations

Increased Readability

- ⇒ Tables for Zoning District Standards
- ⇒ Illustrations of building types, how buildings address the street and public spaces, setbacks, lot dimensions, parking lot layout

Residential Districts

- ⇒ Reduced minimum lot widths and side setbacks
- ⇒ Increase heights & lot coverage and add a zero-lot line provision
- ⇒ Require front-facing garages set back behind front façade
- ⇒ Add minimum open space requirements

C-1 Downtown District

- ⇒ Include form-based design elements
- ⇒ Permit detached, attached singlefamily and multi-family

C-2 Commercial District

⇒ Add design standards

C-3 Office-Apartment District

- ⇒ This should be an office-only district with multi-family allowed by special permit
- ⇒ Do not allow commercial that is not incidental to primary use

I-L Light Industrial District

⇒ Delete heavy uses lumber yards, boat repair, sand/gravel

I-G General Industrial District

⇒ Increase minimum lot size to 5 acres.

1-A Airport District

⇒ Change to NEW Light Industrial based on Market Study

Recreational Vehicle / Travel Trailer District

⇒ Permit as a special permit use within C-2 and Industrial Districts as opposed to having a separate zoning district

MH Manufacture Housing Park District

⇒ Permit as a Special Use in R-3 not as a separate zoning district

Special Permit Uses

⇒ Assess and revise standards including annual renewal process and lack of transferability upon sale of property

Review and Revise As Appropriate

- ⇒ Site Plan Review
- ⇒ Application Requirements
- ⇒ Nonconformities
- ⇒ Administrative Review
- ⇒ Zoning and Hearing Procedures
- ⇒ Variances, Relief Options and Appeals, and Enforcement

The summary above should not be viewed as complete listing of all elements that will be in the new Zoning Ordinance. The final work product will contain many new elements, based on additional public input, City staff review, and elected official comments and contributions. Some of these may include:

- ⇒ Form-Based Code approach for area within the Downtown Character Area including some building types and architectural design standards, such as raised elevations, porches, roof pitch and metal roofing.
- ⇒ Design standards for C-2 commercial regulating building façades, roof pitch, location of parking, signage recommendations.
- ⇒ Standards for accessory units, sometimes referred to as garage apartments or "furnished room over garage" (FROGS).
- ⇒ Better regulation of outdoor sales in commercial districts and storage containers (PODS) and boats in residential districts.
- ⇒ Addition of short-term rentals provisions as well as provisions for bed and breakfast uses.
- ⇒ Addition of telecommunications provisions.
- ⇒ Clarification of the impact on existing nonconforming structures.
- ⇒ Clarification of the role of Planning Commission.